

Archaeological Salvage Recording

Keynsham Cemetery, Durley Hill, Keynsham,
Bath & Northeast Somerset.

(BSMR 30141/30142).



on behalf of:
Keynsham Town Council

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Summary

This report details the results of a programme of archaeological salvage recording undertaken to examine and record archaeological remains exposed in two engineering test pits opened adjacent to the Victorian Chapel at Keynsham Cemetery, Durley Hill, Keynsham (NGR ST 646694).

The test pits were opened by contractors and sited to examine the foundations of the chapel building, a structure which is known to overlie well preserved remains of a nationally important Roman villa (Keynsham Villa - comprising a colonnaded courtyard complex) which was last investigated archaeologically in the 1920's.

The test pits (BSMR 30141 and 30142) exposed the foundations of the Victorian chapel which lay directly above well preserved subterranean archaeological deposits and structures relating to the former Roman villa. These remains, including a substantial masonry wall, a sequence of flagged floor layers, and mixed rubble and soil layers reflecting demolished villa structures and roof materials, are suggested to represent a previously unknown rear corridor inside the villa's north wing and deposits overlying the floor of the known front corridor. Evidence of more recent activity, associated with the construction and use of the Victorian chapel, were also revealed.

The recording exercise has confirmed that well preserved masonry structures and deposits, representing walls and floor levels inside the north wing of the Roman villa, are preserved as shallowly buried archaeological remains directly below and adjacent to the Victorian chapel building.

EVENT 2N2504
SOURCE ~~BN280~~ BN43005
MONUMENT 2N30121

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Acknowledgements

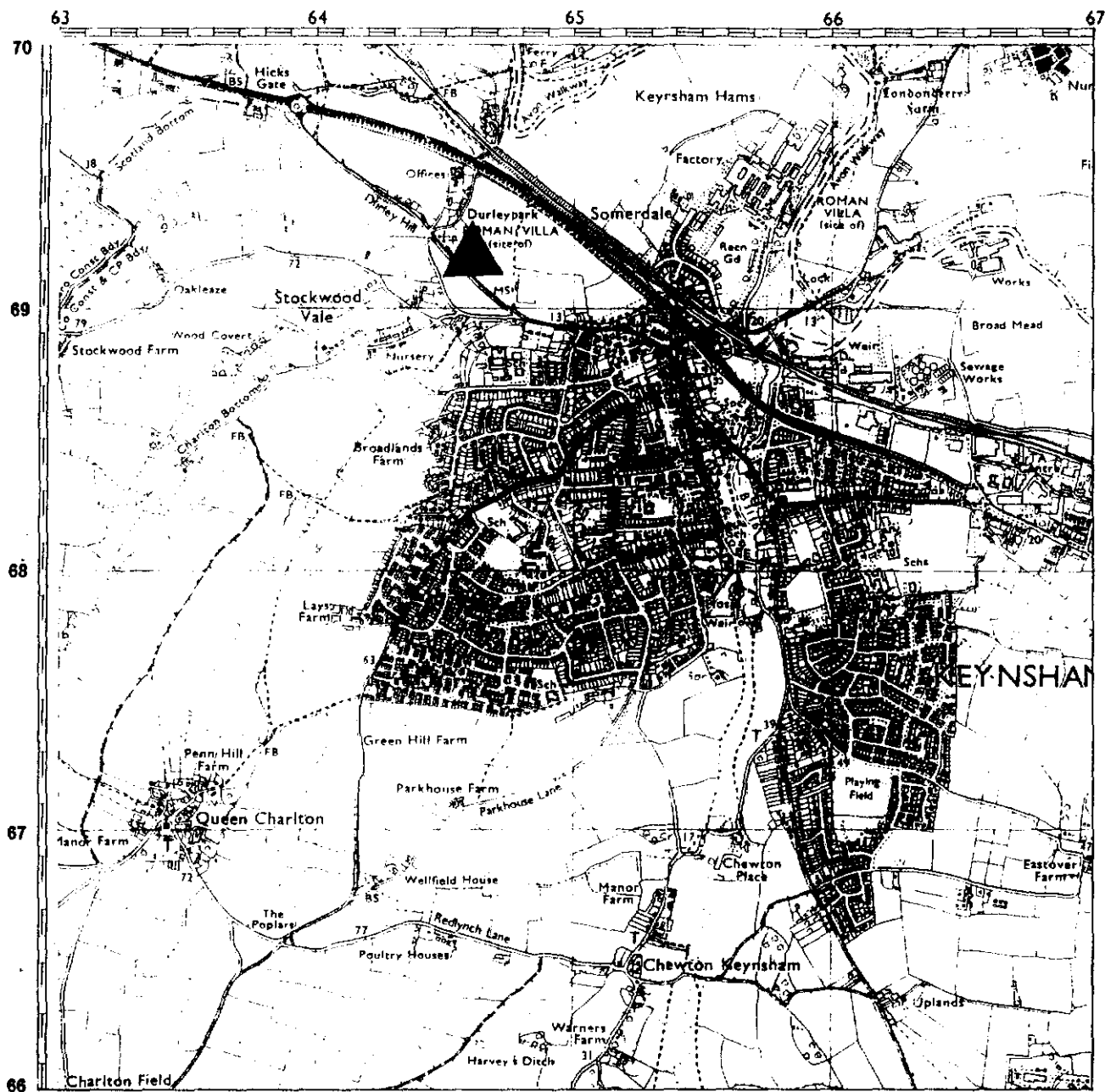
Thanks are due to Keynsham Town Council for funding this archaeological project and to Mark Inglis, Town Clerk, for his assistance in arranging the fieldwork. Thanks are also due to Pat Morris, Keynsham Council Sexton, for his help and interest during the course of the work.

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Figure 1

Archaeological Salvage Project Site Location Plan ▲



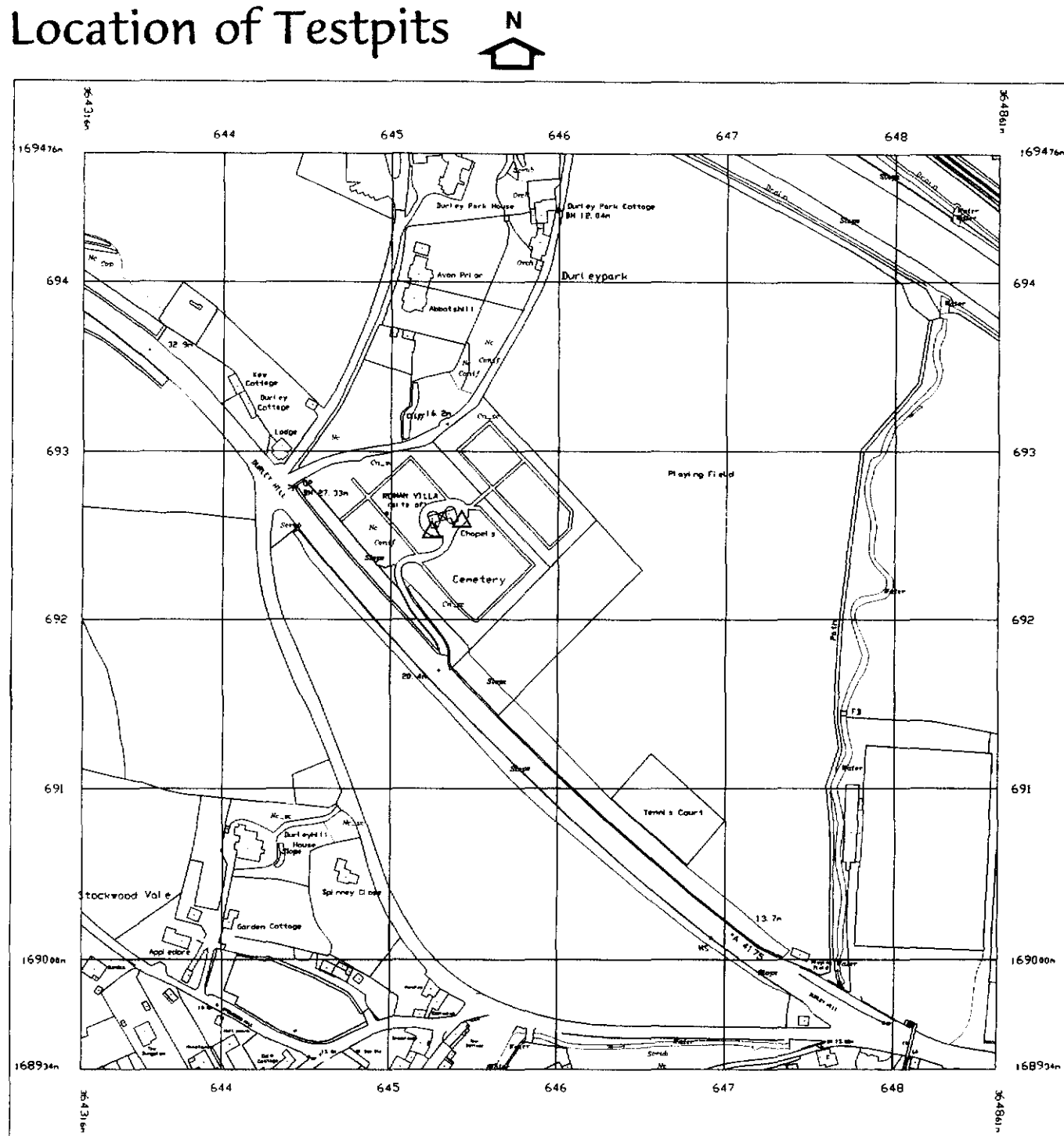
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Keynsham Cemetery, Keynsham, Bath SMR 30141/30142

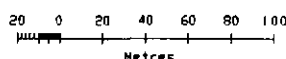
Figure 2

Keynsham Cemetery, Durley Hill, Keynsham: Archaeological Salvage Recording Location of Testpits



Scale 1:2500

△ Testpits



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Figure 3

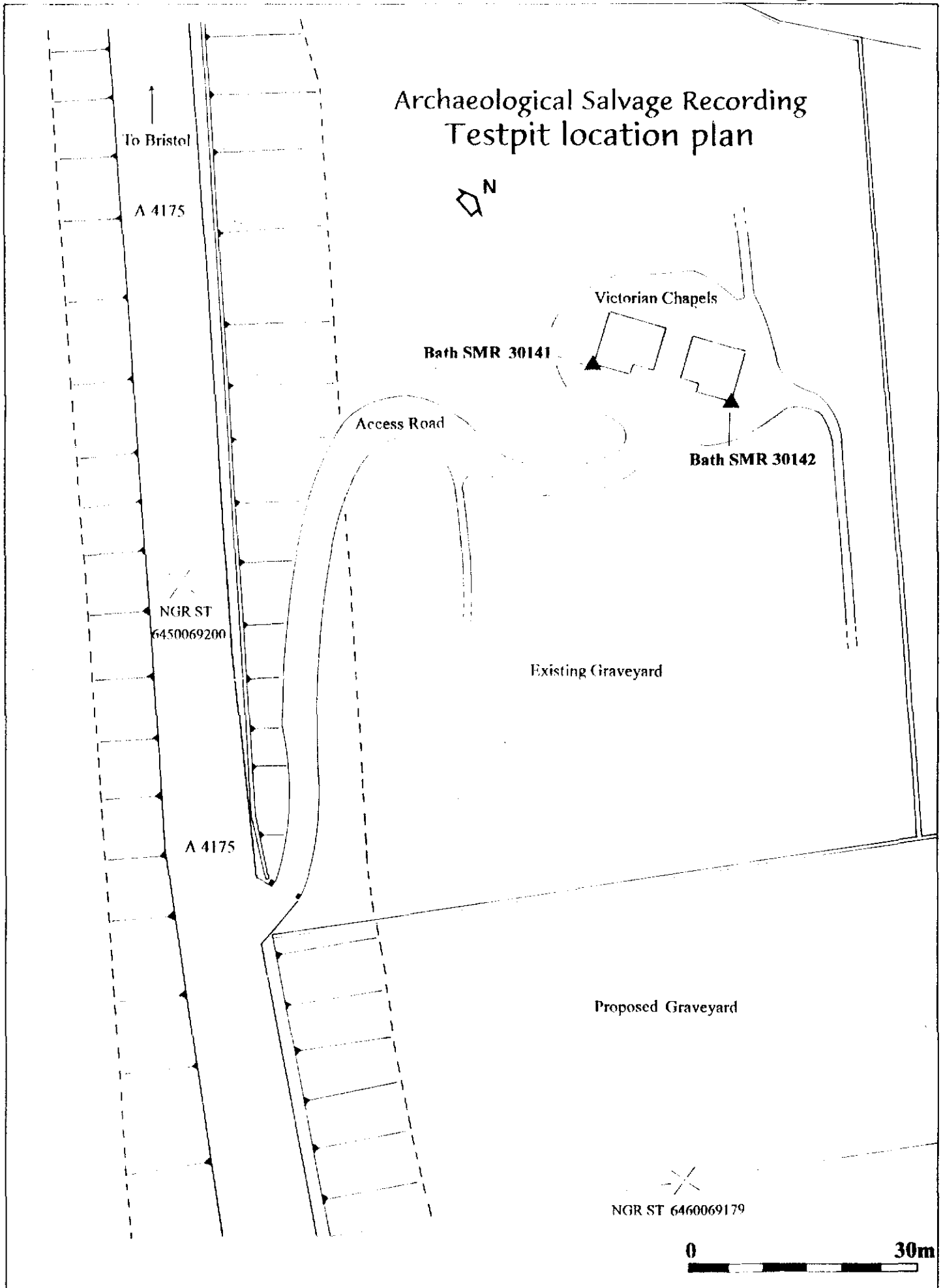
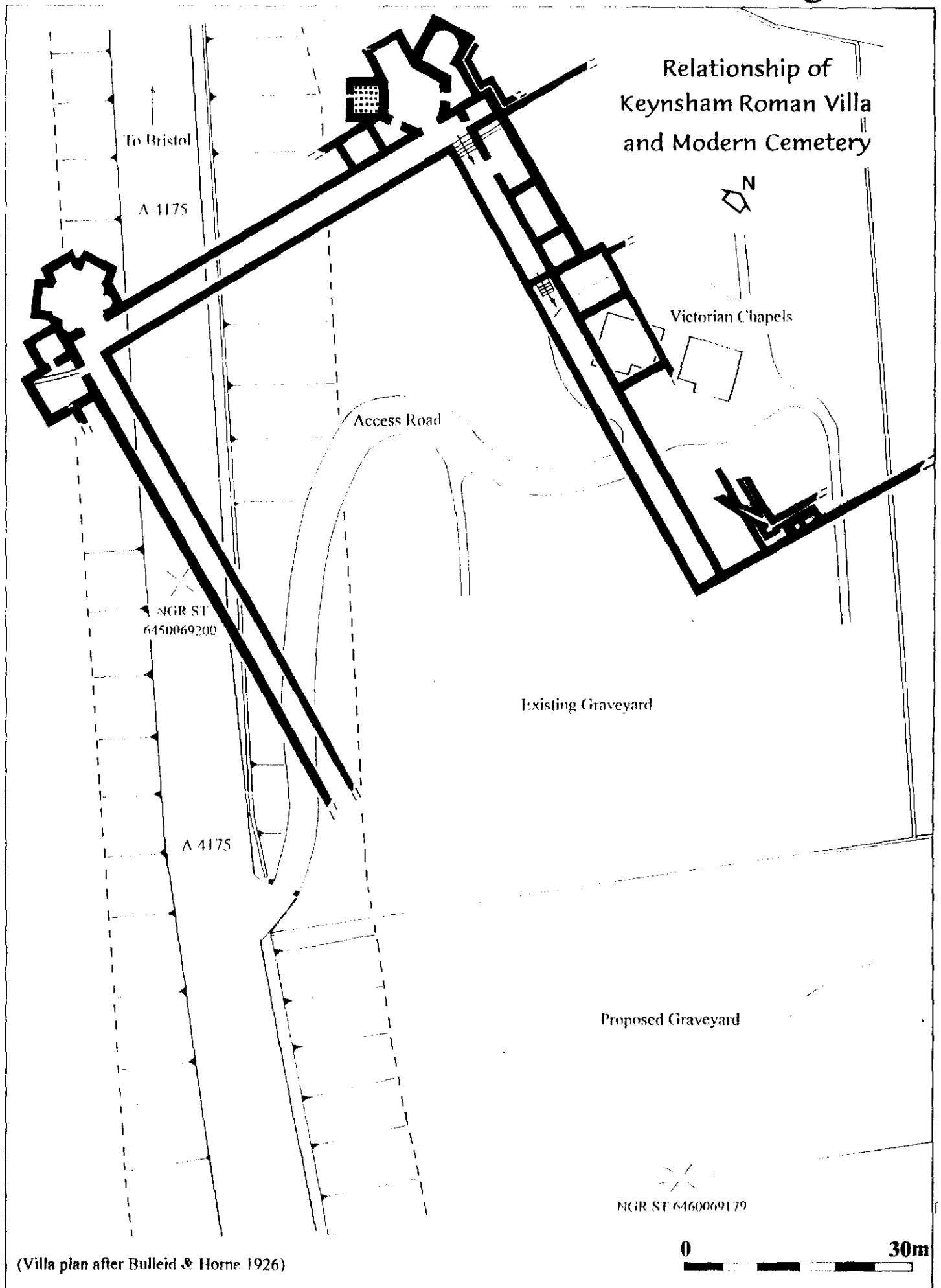


Figure 4



1 INTRODUCTION AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Keynsham Cemetery (SMR 10373) is located at Durley Hill, to the west of the modern town of Keynsham and immediately northeast of the A4175 Keynsham to Durley Hill road (figures 1-2; NGR ST 646 694).

1.2 This archaeological recording project was commissioned by Keynsham Town Council and designed to record archaeological remains revealed in two engineering test pits excavated at the southern and northern ends of the Victorian Chapel of Rest. For archaeological recording purposes the southern pit was assigned Bath SMR 30141 and the northern pit Bath SMR 30142.

1.3 The study area is situated across the junction of Keuper Marl (Mercia Mudstone) bedrock and low lying and recent river alluvium, an area which forms part of the alluvial flood plane known as the Keynsham Hams. It also lies within the known footprint of a substantial colonnaded courtyard Roman Villa (SMR 1208), Keynsham villa, a complex of national importance (although not a Scheduled Ancient Monument). The site has been used as the principal cemetery for Keynsham since the mid-19th century and now contains a dense concentration of many hundred human internments. Gravedigging during the second half of the 19th century revealed substantial remains of the former villa including walls, floors and tessellated floors although it was not until the 1920's that any archaeological work was undertaken to more fully investigate and record those remains.

1.4 The excavations carried out between 1922 and 1924 (Bulleid & Horne 1926) represent the only archaeological investigations on the site of the villa complex dated, largely on stylistic grounds, to the mid-late 3rd century (Russell, 1985). The general ground-plan of the villa (indicated on figure 4) as recorded during the 1920's work, shows a large central courtyard surrounded by three corridor wings with luxurious 'Triclinium' suites comprising hexagonal rooms, decorated with geometric and figurative mosaics, situated at the western ends of the north and south corridors. The whole complex appears carefully designed to appreciate a sweeping view to the southeast, along the Avon Valley. What is clear from the limited excavation evidence is that the villa was very large, extremely well appointed and extensively furnished; the consensus of modern interpretation is that the complex represented a grand country house as opposed to the administrative centre of a working villa estate.

1.5 More recent, if albeit limited, archaeological interventions on the site have included a 'trial excavation' of a cemetery extension to the northeast at NGR ST6454 6930 (SMR 10374) and the archaeological recording of a grave excavation at ST6450 6925 (SMR 10537). Archaeological remains were observed in both instances although limited evidence was recovered. Trial excavations undertaken immediately to the east of the cemetery in 1998 (Cox, 1998) revealed further buried remains associated with the villa, these included a boundary wall, negative soil features reflecting former timber structures, and two substantial masonry foundations suggested to represent the western end of the villa's south wing and, the possible position of a further hexagonal room suite.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The two engineering test pits were dug by hand (by contractors) in order to examine the state of the existing chapel wall foundations. Not surprisingly, no consideration was paid to archaeological stratigraphy during their excavation. The

two pits were located at the northeast and northwestern corners of the chapel building (figure 3; Testpits 1 and 2).

2.2 Archaeological recording comprised three stages:

- i Hand cleaning of all trench sections and all archaeological/natural features and deposits revealed in plan. Recovery of finds where appropriate.
- ii Recording in archaeological plan and section drawings at appropriate scales, all coordinated to Ordnance Survey datum.
- iii Compilation of a descriptive context record for all deposits and structures revealed in each of the test pits.
- iv A full photographic record of each archaeological section and all other features revealed in each test pit.
- v Compilation of a project archive and the preparation of this report.

It should be noted that the recording work was not designed to undertake any further archaeological excavation other than that necessary to clarify features or deposits already exposed in the test pits.

3 DETAILED SITE OBSERVATIONS

The following section describes the evidence revealed in each of the test pits.

3.1 PIT 1 - Bath SMR 30142

1.10m x 1.10m x 1.20m (max.)

16 Archaeological contexts

figure 5 (5.1 - 5.5); SMR 30142 Plates a and b below

Testpit 1 was excavated flush with the external walls of the Victorian chapel through c. 0.12m of modern concrete and scalplings (contexts 100 and 101 respectively). The following series of subterranean features and deposits were revealed:

3.1.1 Plan View

figure 5.1

Wall 106 - The earliest archaeological evidence revealed comprising a stretch of well preserved coursed and faced sandstone masonry orientated west-east. The wall was 0.70m wide and primarily formed of subangular limestone blocks (< 0.20m wide) with occasional limestone rubble, bonded with a fine sandy mortar. The masonry had been destroyed and removed to a greater depth at the western end although even here the base of the wall was not revealed. Where best preserved the masonry was 0.75m high, the highest course preserved at a depth of 0.60m (c. 14.6m OD) below the present ground surface. The northern face of the wall was visible in plan but not exposed in section.

Cut 111 - A linear cut located along the south side of Wall 106 and only observed in plan. The cut representing a construction trench for the wall, cutting the surrounding natural stiff red clay (107).

Layer 112 - A deposit consisting of larger limestone rubble only partly exposed and lying directly above the natural substrata (107). Also observed in the northwest facing section.

Layer 113 - layer of gritty reddish-brown clay (similar to the natural substrata) butting the southern face of Wall 106 containing isolated pockets of cleaner grey clay. The layer (113) was archaeologically sterile but did not appear to have been cut by the wall foundation trench (111 above).

3.1.2 Northeast Facing Section figure 5.2

Wall 106 - the coursed limestone masonry was partly revealed in section, lying directly beneath the masonry foundations (Wall 104) of the Victorian chapel. The south face of the wall was butted by natural clay deposit 107 and no wall foundation cut (Cut 111, above) was visible. The uppermost section of Wall 106 was indicated by an increased proportion of sandy mortar and a few disturbed masonry blocks reflecting an area where the masonry appeared to have been disturbed or robbed.

Layer 108 - A layer of pale grey silty clay overlying the natural clay and butting the southern face of Wall 106. The deposit was archaeologically sterile.

Deposit 112 - this irregular rubble deposit either butted or truncated Layer 108.

Layer 113 - (as above) also here the deposit butted the disturbed upper masonry of Wall 106 and overlay rubble deposit 112.

Cut 115 - a cut horizon representing the foundation trench for the Victorian chapel wall. Cut 115 truncated Layer 113 and Wall 106, and possibly rubble deposit 112.

Wall 104 - coursed and faced pennant sandstone masonry forming the north wall of the Victorian chapel.

3.1.3 Southwest Facing Section figure 5.3

Wall 106 - here the masonry was overlain to the southeast by **Deposit 103**, a fairly loosely compacted layer of dark yellowish-brown gritty clay which contained inclusions of small rounded pebbles, occasional sandstone fragments and patches of crushed limestone.

Layer 102 - a layer of dark brown and loosely compacted gritty clay layer contained numerous sandstone rubble fragments and occasional shards of modern glass.

Cut 109 - U shaped cut and fill (110) of a modern service pipe trench.

Layer 101 - layer of modern scalplings.

Layer 100 - layer of modern concrete.



a



b

Testpit 1, Keynsham Cemetery, Keynsham, Bath SMR 30142

3.1.4 Northwest Facing Section figure 5.4

Wall 106 - the southern face of the wall masonry was set into the natural substrata (107) although, again, no foundation cut was visible in section.

Deposit 112 - the rubble deposit lay directly above the natural substratum (107) although here it was possible that the material reflected the edge of a rubble structure as opposed to chaotic fill material.

Note - no equivalent to Layer 108 (NE facing section above) was revealed in this section.

Layer 113 - (as above) here the layer butted the faced masonry of Wall 106 and either butted or was cut by the possible rubble feature 112. The upper surface of the deposit was located at the same level as the uppermost course of surviving wall masonry.

Layer 114 - possibly filling a broad shallow cut defined by the junction of this and the underlying layers. A layer of dark and compacted greyish-brown gritty clay. The layer contained numerous variously sized sandstone and sporadic limestone rubble, some of which appeared to be heat-affected. Occasional charcoal flecks and pockets of fine sandy mortar were also present in the layer. The precise relationship between layers 103 and 114 was obscured by the cut of a modern drain pipe although they appeared to represent the same deposit.

Layer 102 - as SW facing section above.

Layers 101 and 100 - as above.

3.1.5 Southeast Facing Section figure 5.5

Wall 106 - here the depth of masonry destroyed during the excavation of the pit was indicated by core masonry (stipple and rubble) preserved in the pit section. The hole revealed the core of the masonry but did not break through the north face of the wall.

Layer 103 - as SW facing section above.

Layer 102 - as SW facing section above.

Layers 101 and 100 - as above.

3.2 PIT 2 - Bath SMR 30141 1.55m x 1.5m x c. 1m 16 archaeological contexts figure 6 (6.1 - 6.7); SMR 30141 Plates a and b below

This pit was opened to examine foundations forming the southeastern corner of the Victorian chapel. Here the underlying archaeological deposits were more varied and complex than those revealed in Pit 1 above.

3.2.1 Plan View figure 6.1

The plan view as cleaned (**SMR 30142; Plates a and b**) shows the majority of archaeological contexts revealed in this pit although they are difficult to appreciate from this aspect and are therefore described in detail below in the four recorded sections. What the plan view does highlight well is the area where archaeological remains were totally destroyed, as indicated by the central exposure of clean natural clay (203).

3.2.2 Southeast Facing Section figure 6.2

Layer 203 - the natural stiff reddish-brown clay substratum.

Floor Layer 205 - a thin seam of flat sandstone slabs lying directly above the natural clay.

?Wall 207 - a single block of possible wall masonry overlying a pennant floor slab (205) bonded with a sandy material.

Layer 208 - a well consolidated wedge shaped deposit of coarse sandstone rubble within a matrix containing pockets of sandy clay mortar.

Cut 210 - broad U shaped cut for a modern ceramic service pipe and backfilled material (211).

Layer 201 - layer of modern scalplings

Layer 200 - layer of modern concrete

3.2.3 Northeast Facing Section figure 6.3

note - this exposure sloped at c. 60 degrees

Layer 203 - natural substrata

Floor Layer 205 - a seam of flat sandstone slabs varying from 1-3 in number. The slabs were missing in the central portion. Interpreted to represent up to three episodes of flooring.

Layer 208 - c.700mm thick disorganised wedge of larger sandstone (and some limestone) rubble tipping from the north and northeast. Set within a greyish-brown silty clay matrix containing denser patches of orange sandy ?mortar and occasional charcoal.

Layer 214 - disorganised layer of tightly packed larger sandstone and limestone rubble in a dark brown silty clay matrix. A number of pennant tile fragments were present at the base of the deposit, immediately above Floor Layer 205.

Feature 209 - localised deposit of gritty soil, charcoal and small sandstone fragments, probably the fill of a shallow modern cut.

Layer 201 - as above.

Layer 200 - as above.

3.2.4 Northwest Facing Section figure 6.4

Layer 203 - natural substrata

Floor Layer 205 - further exposure of seams of thin flat sandstone slabs representing a single floor or as many as five separate floor layers. The layer was possibly truncated to the southwest by rubble layer 214. Where best preserved the individual floor slabs were separated by a thin layer of charcoal rich orange sandy clay interpreted as successive bedding material.

Layer 214 - as above. Here the direction of tip appeared to be from the southwest.

Layer 204 - a layer of moderately compacted dark yellowish-brown gritty clay. The deposit contained large sandstone and occasional limestone rubble and frequent nodules of chert. Again the deposit appeared to have tipped from the southwest.

Layer 202 - a layer of dark greyish-brown silty clay containing inclusions of grit, charcoal and crushed sandstone. Very similar to deposit 209 (above).

Layer 201 - as above.

Layer 200 - as above.

3.2.5 Southwest Facing Section figure 6.5

Layer 203 - natural substrata

Floor Layer(s) 205 - as above. The series of possible floor layers were best preserved in this section where each seam was separated by a bedding or mortar layer of charcoal rich orange sandy clay. The layers were truncated by deposit 206.

Layer 204 - as above.

Layer 202 - as above.

Cut 212 - cut for modern drainpipe. Filled by mixed small rubble, stones and ceramic pipe (213).

Layer 202 - as above.

Deposit 206 - solid dark concrete block with some clinker and occasional rubble representing the foundation for the Victorian masonry.

Wall 215 - Masonry foundations of Victorian chapel.

Layer 201 - as above.

Layer 200 - as above.



a



b

Testpit 2, Keynsham Cemetery, Keynsham, Bath SMR 30141

3.2.6 Southeast & Southwest Facing Sections figures 6.6 and 6.7

These two sections are described collectively.

Layer 203 - natural substrata.

Floor Layer(s) 205 - as above. Up to four possible separate thin layers of sandstone slabs preserved beneath Layer 204.

Layer 204 - (as above) although here the deposit was confined to either one or two larger stones and a yellowish-brown gritty clay matrix.

Deposit 206 - as above.

Wall 215 - as above.

4 FINDS AND DATING

The few finds which were recovered from the test pits were mostly removed from the excavated spoil and therefore unstratified. In the case of the northernmost pit (SMR 30142) the lack of finds is not surprising, as the majority of the excavated material represented previously bonded wall masonry. The few finds from the southern pit (SMR 30141) of note included pottery sherds of late 3rd - early 4th century Wiltshire Colour Coated Ware and a fragment of a mid-3rd century Oxford Ware Dragendorf 38 rim copy (Dr Mark Corney, pers.comm). Other finds included two complete lozenge shaped roof tiles complete with nail holes, various fragments of similar tiles, plus four small *lias tesserae*.

Despite this paucity of finds, the dating of the principal structures revealed in each of the pits is undoubtedly Romano-British as indicated by the absence of other dating evidence and their congruence with the known villa layout.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Testpit 1 (SMR 30142)

This pit opened at the northeast corner of the chapel revealed a previously unknown section of Roman wall whose orientation fits into the overall rectilinear pattern recorded in the 1920's (see figures 4 and 7). The wall foundations were set in a narrow foundation trench (.0.3m deep) cut into the natural clay, the masonry itself well preserved below a level of c. 14.6m OD. but seemingly disturbed above this.

The masonry is substantial, bonded with sandy-clay, and of consistent size to the majority of the party wall and principal masonry (between 2'- 2'6" wide) recorded by Bulleid & Horne. However, this stretch is located to the north of the areas of the north wing investigated in the 1920's excavations and, when compared with that groundplan, indicates the presence of further rooms or structures to the north and possibly a rear corridor, set out on the north side of Bulleid & Horne's 'Room A' (see figure 7). The presence of such a corridor would complete the symmetry of an east facing north wing comprising front and rear corridors, the former continuous,

the latter possibly partitioned, and a central 'cottage' range of larger rooms (including Bulleid & Horne's Room A - containing a tessellated floor in a fretwork pattern).

Deposits revealed in the sections of Testpit 1 mostly comprised disorganised rubble, probably demolition material but also features relating to modern services and surfacing. Layer 108 is of some interest as it provides an indication of a possible contemporary ground level on the south side of the wall (i.e. inside the suggested corridor) and coincides with the level to which the masonry forming the wall appeared to have been disturbed or robbed. Elsewhere on the site recent work (Cox, *ibid*) has noted that Roman masonry is commonly robbed to the top of the foundations, but often no lower.

5.2 Testpit 2 (SMR 30141)

This pit had cut through a more complex sequence of archaeological deposits, although the majority of these appeared to reflect demolition rubble from adjacent villa structures. Of greatest interest are the sequence of well laid pennant floor slabs (Layer 205) partially preserved at the base of the sequence which were set directly above the natural clay and preserved immediately beneath the concrete foundations of the Victorian chapel. Up to five seams of thin floor slabs were indicated, those in the northern corner of the cutting separated by thin deposits of sandy clay bedding material. This evidence suggests that the floor in this area was relaid on several occasions, possibly because the thin slabs would have cracked and fragmented relatively easily.

The presence of fragments of pennant rooftile in situ, above the floor slabs at the base of Layer 214 (further complete examples were recovered from the excavated spoil), is also of interest and fits with a sequence of destruction where roofing materials collapse at an early stage, followed thereafter by masonry walls and upstanding structures.

The position of the testpit in relation to the 1920's groundplan (figure 4) indicates that the pennant layers formed the floor of the north corridor (shown as R3 on figure 7). Similar 'badly cracked pennant squares' were noted to form the floor at the western end of the same corridor (Bulleid and Horne, *ibid*; p.113).

Finally, the single stone block (?Wall 207), suggested to represent a fragment of in situ masonry, fits well with the position of the wall indicated to separate the north wing corridor and an internal room (figure 7; Rooms R3 and A).

6 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND ADVICE

The programme of salvage recording has provided some limited but important new information which adds to our understanding of the Keynsham Roman villa complex, in particular the possible original arrangement of its north wing, which may have comprised front and rear corridors either side of a central range of larger rooms.

Equally importantly, the work has shown that very substantial structural remains and deposits representing elements of the villa's north wing are preserved in situ at the level of, or below (from south to north - between c. 15.8m and 14.7m OD) the foundations of the Victorian chapel.

It is advised that all future intrusive engineering works which may be required for Health & Safety reasons, either adjacent to or within the footprint of the Victorian chapel, should be designed to ensure that archaeological remains underlying the Victorian chapel are retained in situ if this is feasible. If the need for intrusive structural works overrides the need for archaeological preservation in situ, then all intrusive ground works which can reasonably be expected to destroy buried archaeological remains should be conducted archaeologically (i.e. all shoring/underpinning pits, trenches etc. dug by archaeologists), as part of a research orientated excavation project.

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General References

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fig. 5.2
Northeast facing section

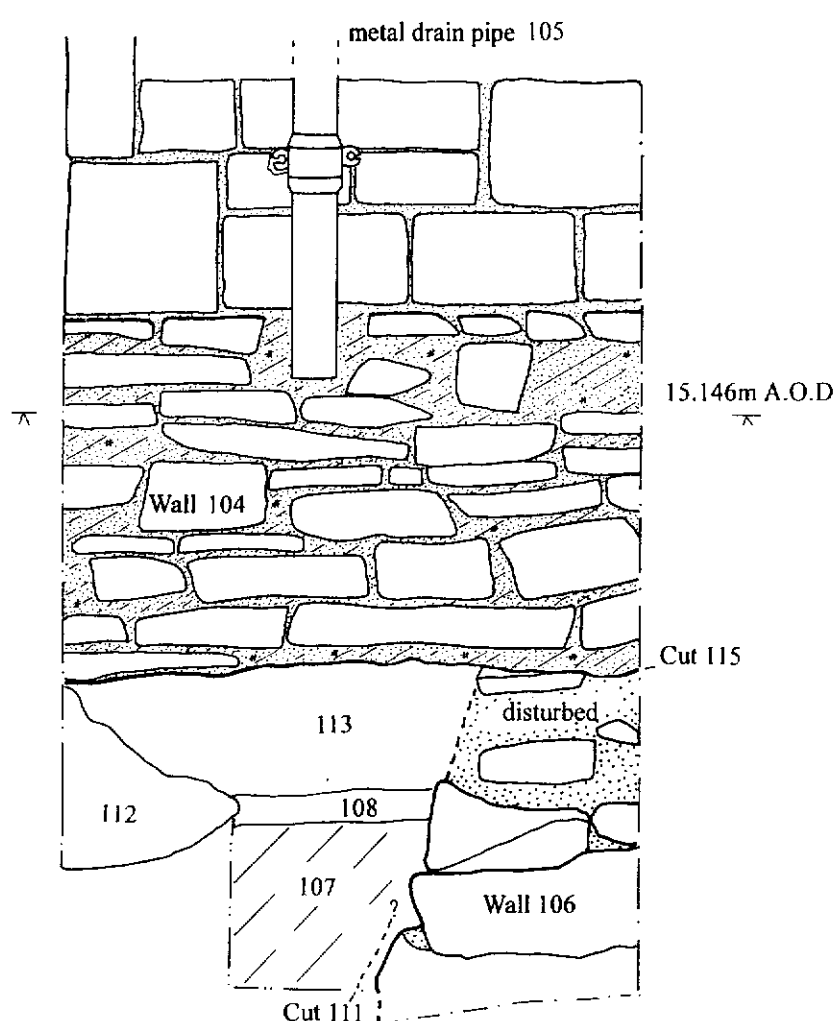


fig. 5.4
Northwest facing section

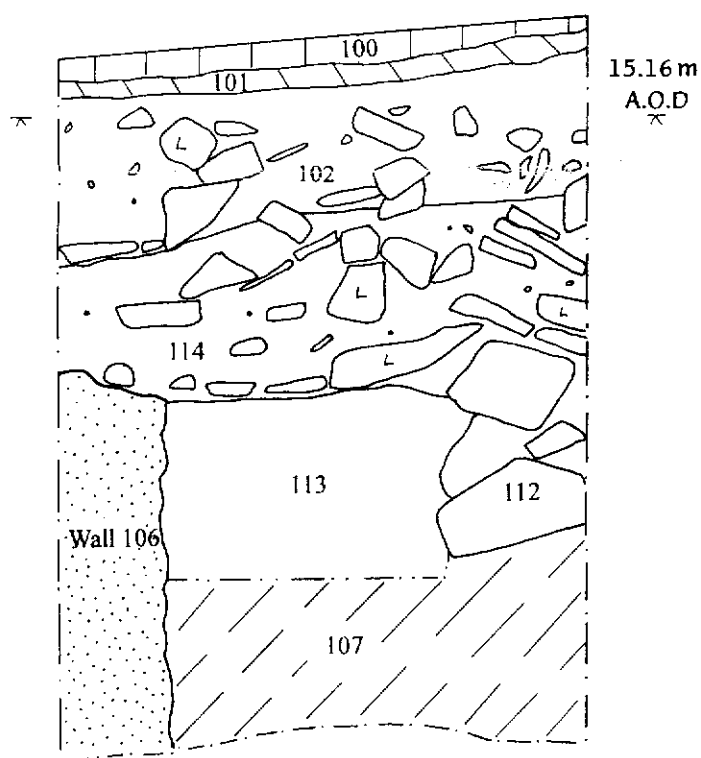


fig. 5.1
Plan of Test Pit 1

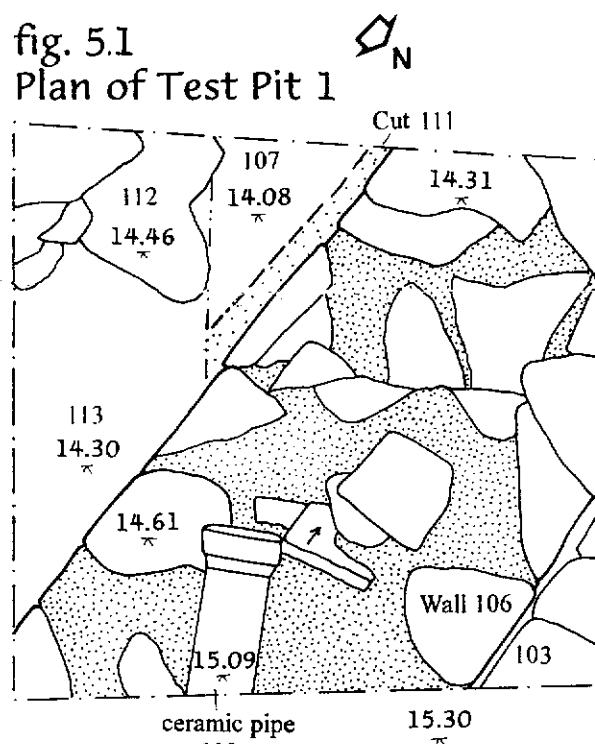
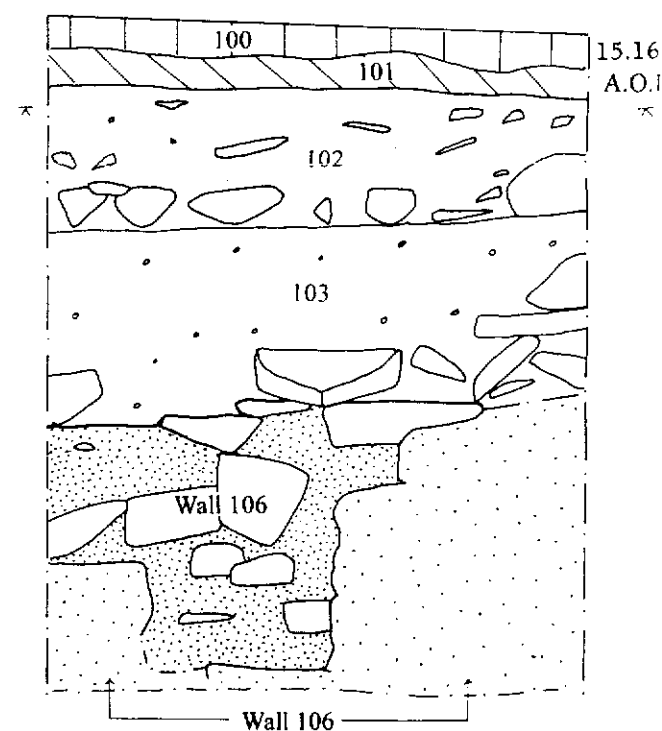


fig. 5.5
Southeast facing section



- concrete
- scalpings
- limestone
- sandy mortar
- natural clay
- Victorian chapel foundation

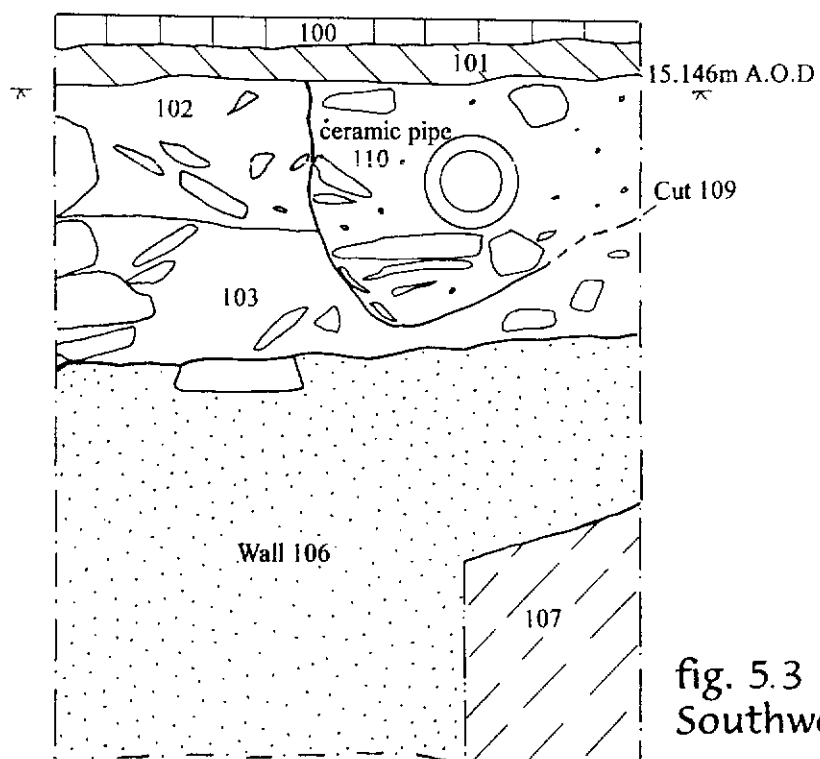
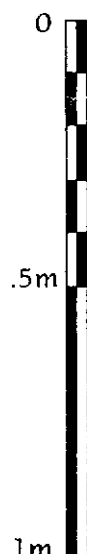


fig. 5.3
Southwest facing section

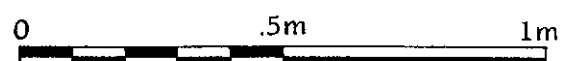


Figure 6

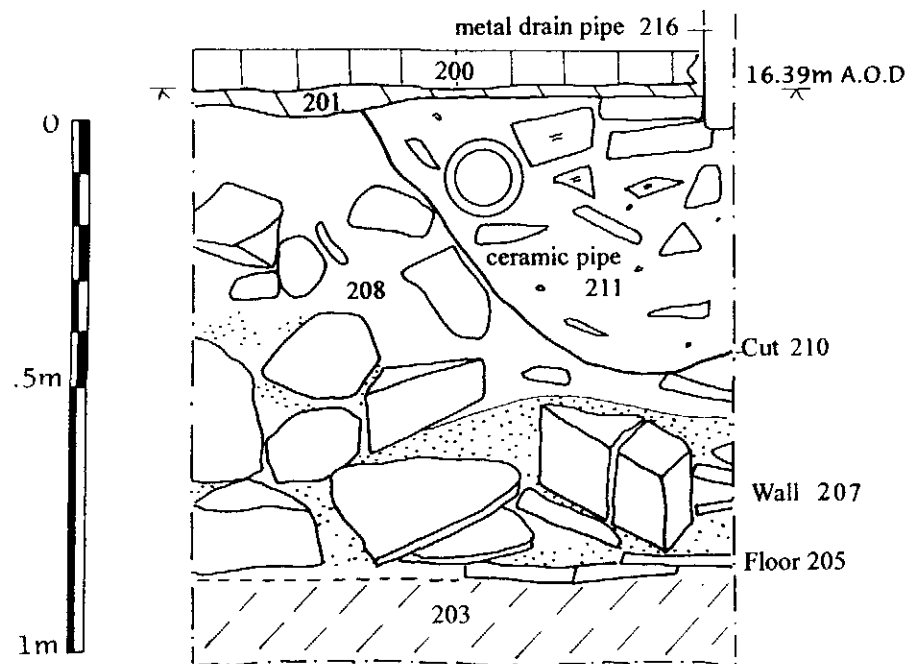


fig. 6.2
Southeast facing section

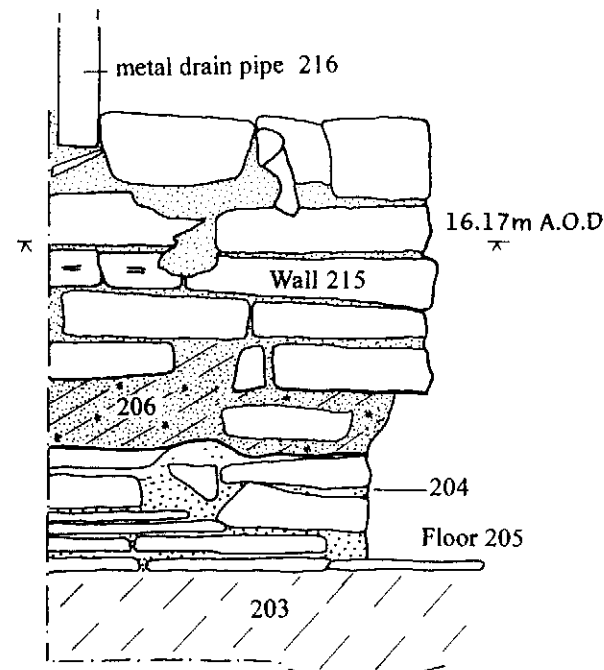


fig. 6.6
Southwest facing section

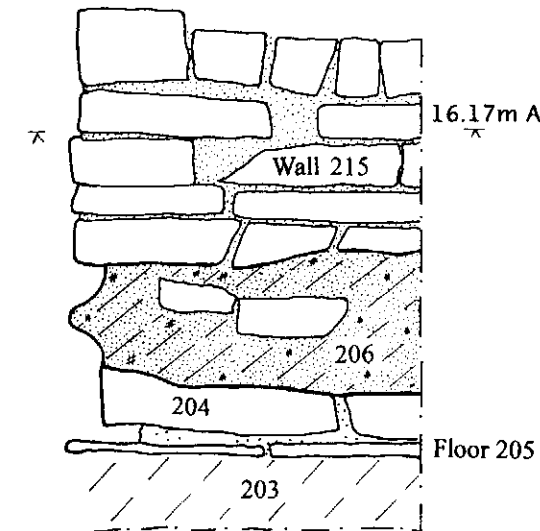


fig. 6.7
Southeast facing section

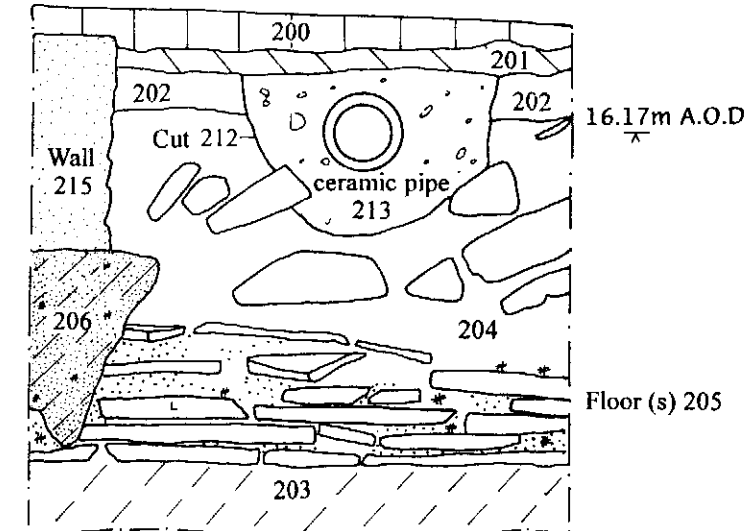


fig. 6.5
Southwest facing section

fig. 6.4
Northwest facing section

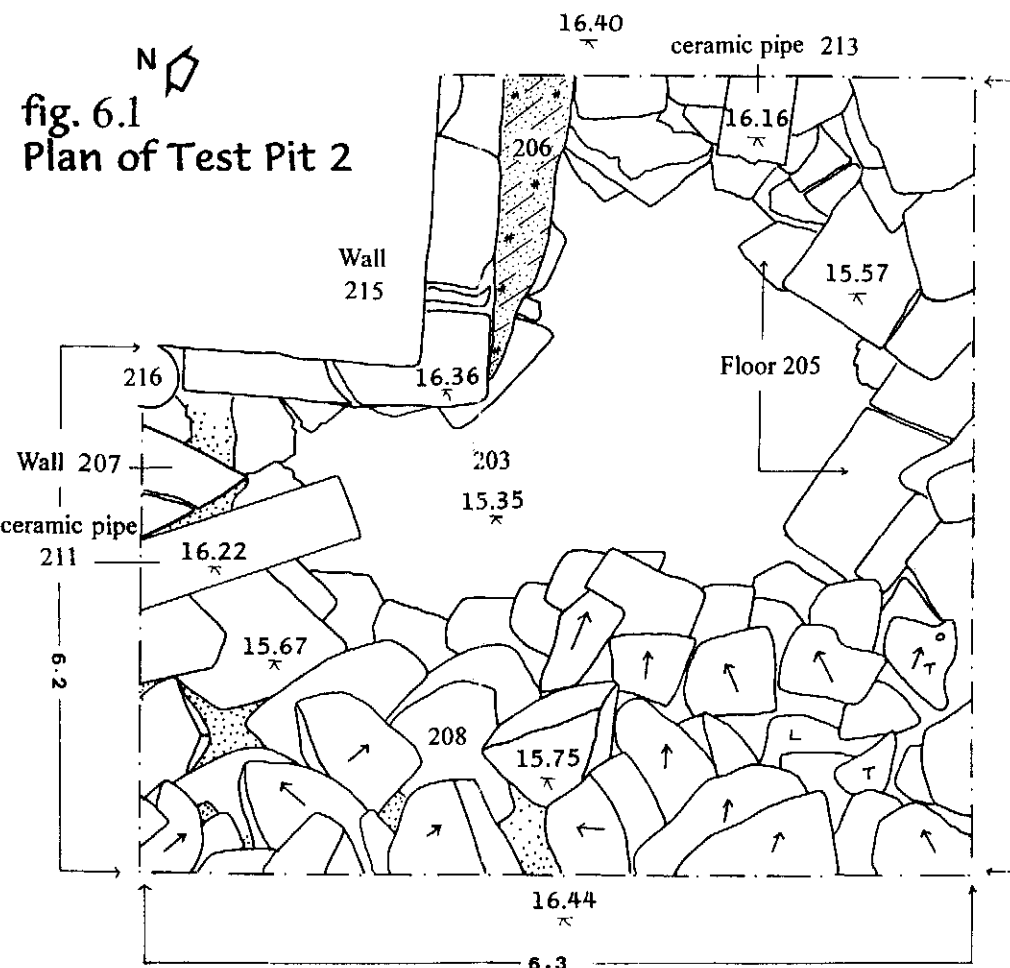
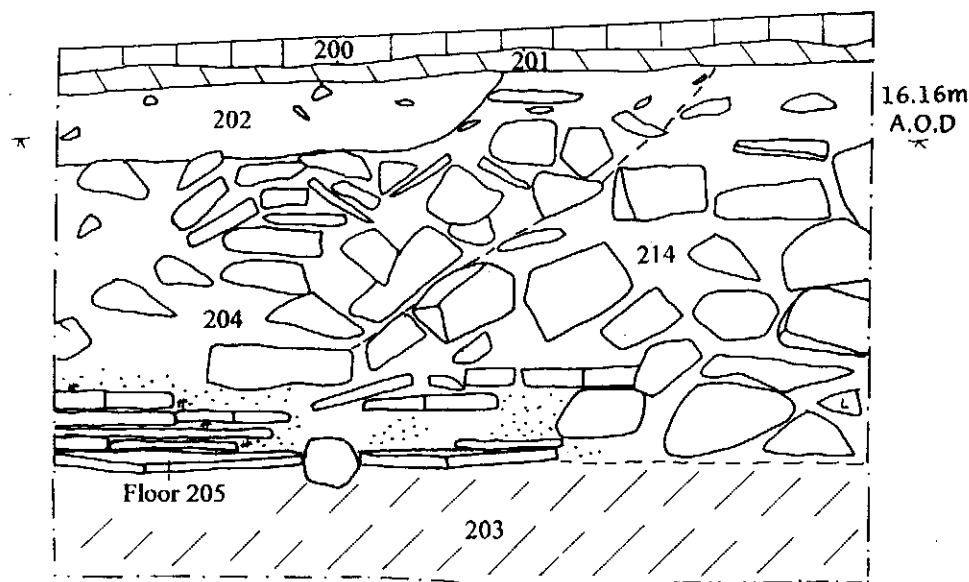


fig. 6.3
Northeast facing section

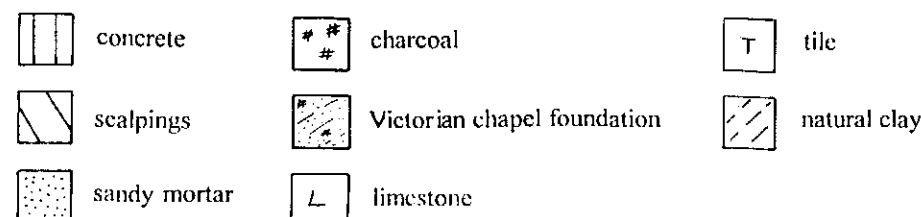
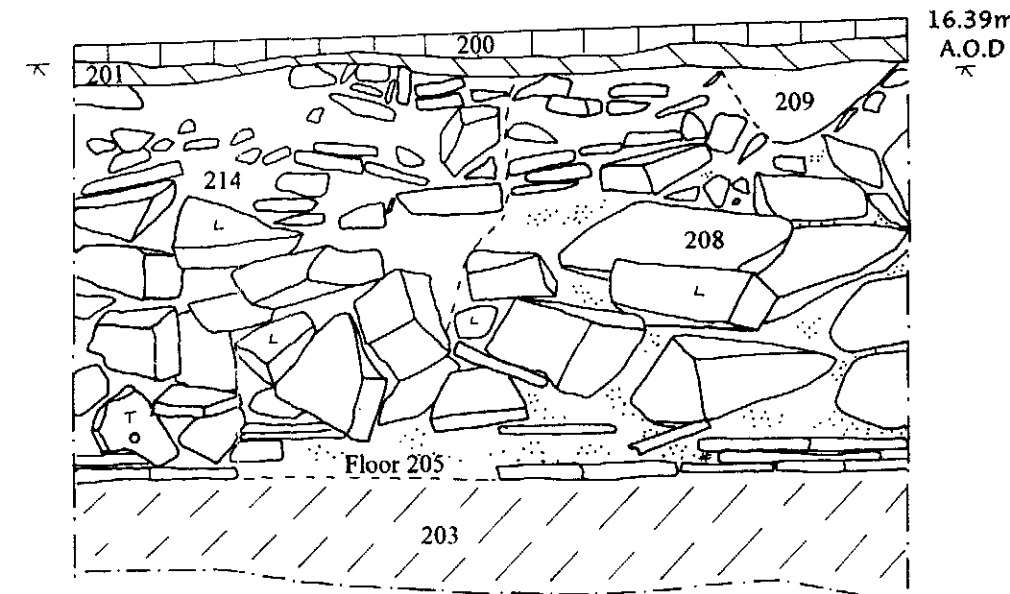
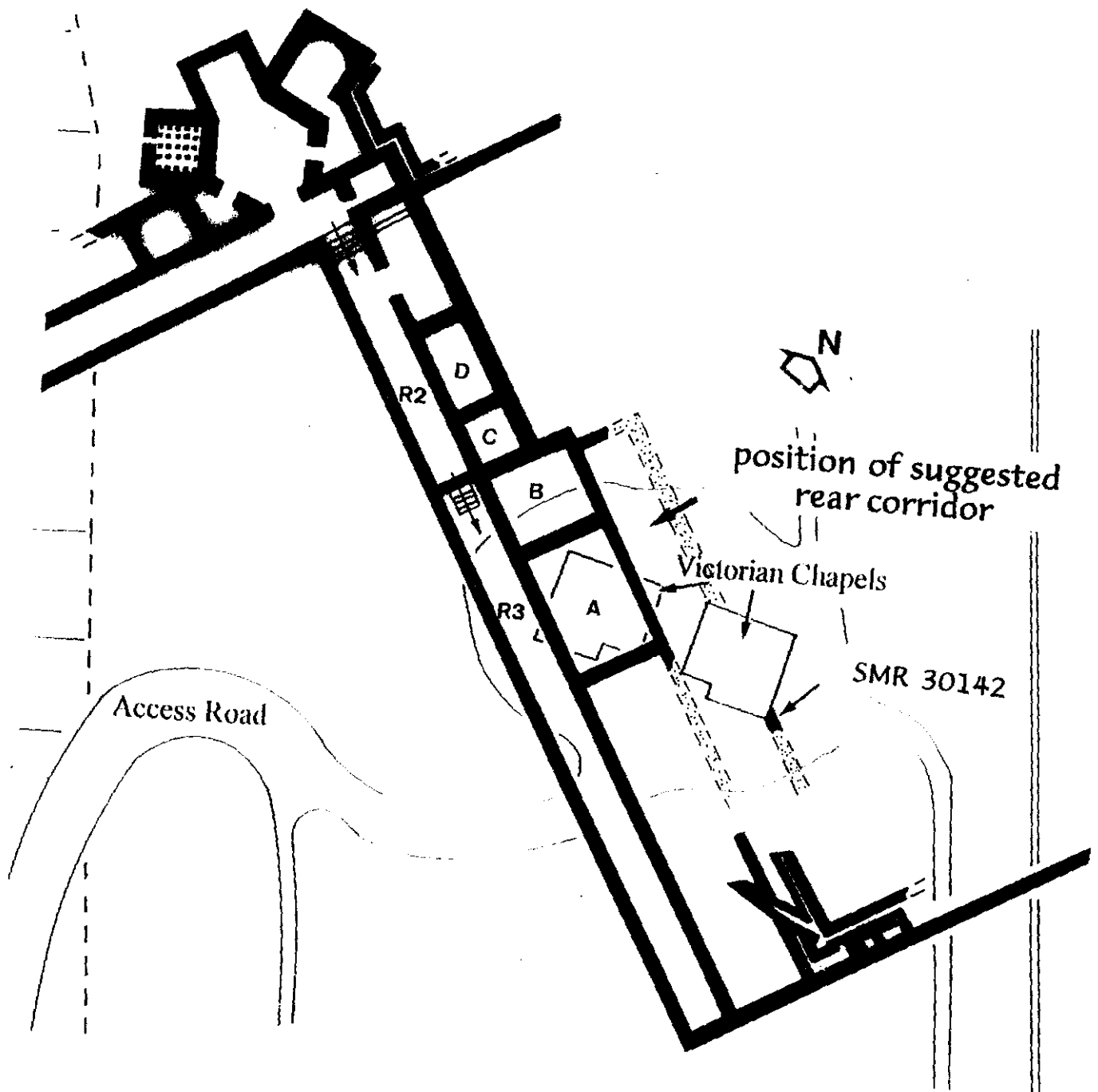


figure 7
Keynsham Roman Villa :
Interpretation of Wall 106 - ?a possible rear
corridor in the North Wing



SMR 30142
not to scale

CONTEXT LIST & BRIEF DESCRIPTION

TESTPIT 1 (SMR 30142)

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
100	modern concrete
101	thin layer of pink scalplings
102	recent rubble layer
103	loosely compacted layer
104	northeastern facing wall of chapel
105	metal drain pipe
106	Roman Wall
107	natural substrata
108	band of pale grey clay
109	cut of modern drain
110	ceramic pipe
111	cut of foundation trench
112	rubble layer
113	layer of possible redeposited material
114	greyish-brown compacted clay
115	foundation cut for Wall 104

TESTPIT 2 (30141)

CONTEXT	DESCRIPTION
200	modern concrete
201	layer of pinkish scalplings
202	dark greyish-brown clay
203	natural clay substrata
204	layer of compacted yellowish-brown clay
205	Floor/s
206	foundation for Southeast facing wall of chapel (215)
207	possible Roman Wall
208	masonry tumble
209	small deposit of dark greyish clay identical to 202
210	cut for modern drain
211	ceramic drain pipe
212	cut for modern drain pipe
213	ceramic pipe
214	layer of tightly packed sandstone rubble (identical to 102, Testpit 1)
215	southwestern wall of chapel